

Independent Commissions Seek Public Input in Renewed Redistricting Procedures for Burbank, Regional and State Districts

By **Devin Herenda** - October 13, 2021

Los Angeles County Citizens Redistricting Commission



Following the [2020 Census report](#), the statewide process of redistricting has continued to move forward throughout 2021 for regional and state electoral districts.



Amongst Burbank and other Los Angeles County municipalities, redistricting falls to the authority of the Los Angeles County Citizens Redistricting Commission and the California Citizens Redistricting Commission.

The Aug. 24 Burbank City Council meeting included a [staff report](#) advocating for the approval of letters encouraging the continuance of Burbank, Glendale, and Pasadena as a singular electoral district. The letters were sent to both the California CRC and L.A. County CRC after the council voted 5-0 in their approval.

The City Manager's Office staff report detailed that Burbank currently falls under State Assembly District 43, the 5th Supervisorial District of the County of Los Angeles, State Senate Districts 18 and 25, and both the 28th and 30th Congressional Districts. Glendale likewise lies within State Assembly District 43, and certain areas of Glendale, Pasadena, and Burbank overlap in their County Supervisorial, Congressional, and State Senate district lines.

The report additionally stated that, "given their shared historical, cultural, and economic backgrounds, the tri-city communities of Burbank, Glendale, and Pasadena may be considered a Community of Interest, defined as a concentrated population with common social and economic interests that should be included within a single district."



California Citizens Redistricting Commissioner, Isra Ahmad (photo courtesy of Fredy Ceja)

Redistricting involves redrawing electoral district boundaries with the goal of expanding the power of voters and promoting equal representation across the state. In the past, elected officials would be left in charge of redistricting in California. This often led to gerrymandering, creating unfair leverage for certain politicians and ensuring reelection for those already in office. As a result of the [Voters FIRST Act of 2008](#), however, groups of commissioners at both the state and county level are now in charge of drawing district lines to avoid an inequitable outcome.

"We want to know what communities feel they belong together," Executive Director of the L.A. County CRC, Gayla Kraetsch Hartsough, said. "There's a lot of interest...This is an independent, brand-new way of doing this redistricting."

While the Los Angeles County Citizens Redistricting Commission oversees drawing Burbank's Supervisorial district lines, the California Citizens Redistricting Commission is responsible for redistricting the city's

Congressional, State Senate, State Assembly, and Board of Equalization territories.

David Holtzman, a Burbank resident of nearly three years, is currently serving as one of 14 commissioners for the L.A. County CRC. Professionally, he has worked as a scientific law and policy advisor, and attorney for Holtzman Law. Holtzman has personally taken an interest in public service and politics through roles like President of the League of Women's Voters of Los Angeles, where he has contributed since 2005. He joined the commission with the mission of giving a louder voice to L.A. County voters.

"Independent redistricting... is a step forward because the politicians are not choosing their voters anymore," Holtzman said. "Perhaps it will be the first independent redistricting Commission that breaks from the past and draws a radically new map."

**Commissioners visiting Patriotic Hall as site for
our in-person and virtual meetings this fall**



Members of the L.A. County Citizens Redistricting Commission gathered at Patriotic Hall. (photo courtesy of Gayla Kraetsch Hartsough)

Despite the fact that Holtzman sees this process as a positive move towards equal voter representation, he acknowledges that the current commission system is not without its flaws.

"Our commission is designed to be independent, although I'm not sure it's entirely independent of the supervisors," Holtzman said. "Some of the supervisors' offices were recruiting people to put in their candidacy for the commission, and...some of the people on the commission have political organizations that they're connected to that may have relationships with the existing supervisors."

The County CRC has held meetings through virtual and hybrid models since January of 2021, with their last public hearing meeting being held on Sept. 29. Public opinion will still be accepted through December of 2021, and more detailed input can be submitted through [redistricting map proposals](#). This allows the public to submit proposals of how they believe district lines should be drawn within their cities and surrounding areas.

Holtzman predicts that Burbank will be kept within a single Supervisorial district in the commission's final draft. Furthermore, he says Burbank and Glendale will likely remain within the same district, and Burbank, Glendale, and Pasadena may also continue under one district, although this outcome is still pending.

Regular meetings will continue as the map drawing phase is now beginning for the commission. Holtzman foresees map drafts being released by the commission around early November, which will be followed by two hearings and public comments over a 30-day period. Following this phase, the commission will assemble to collectively agree on a final map draft by December 15. This map will go into effect immediately upon its adoption by the commission.

The California CRC is likewise made up of a group of 14 commissioners. California CRC Commissioner Isra Ahmad currently serves as a Senior Research & Evaluation Specialist for Santa Clara County's Division of Equity and Social Justice. She became interested in this commissioner position upon learning of the California CRC's inclusive, community-focused approach to redistricting.

"I thought it was a very, very progressive approach to creating a fair democracy in that those people who are going to be running for those districts are no longer eligible to draw the lines," Ahmad said. "And I just

really wanted to get involved and see how I can contribute my lived experiences, my professional and formal experiences to this process.”

As of Sept. 21, the commission had received the 2020 Census data. California CRC preliminary maps are due by Nov. 15, and final maps are due no later than Dec. 27, 2021.

The commission recently finished a series of community interest input meetings, which consisted of commissioners receiving comments from California communities on their opinions of how electoral district lines should be redrawn in their area. 36 more state commission meetings are planned through December, each of which welcomes public comments. Ahmad says the commission tries to address public input multiple times daily, and numerous times throughout each meeting in order to ensure all voices are heard as they embark upon redistricting.



(photo courtesy of Gayla Kraetsch Hartsough)

“At any point, if someone from the public doesn’t agree with us, doesn’t agree with the type of conversation that we’re having,... does agree with us, or wants to provide their input or different perspectives, we welcome that as this is a massive group project for the maps to be as reflective of as many Californians as possible and the diversity that exists in our state,” Ahmad said.

The formative arrangements of this redistricting cycle are significant in their potential to create progressive changes for voters of Burbank and throughout the State of California. These results will be seen in the final maps collectively drawn by the commissions with adherence to public input.

"I think the whole result of this will be a reflection of the extent to which the commission is willing to disrupt the existing political establishment," Holtzman said.

To learn more about the California CRC, visit their site [here](#).

To learn more about the Los Angeles County CRC, visit their site [here](#).

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